

The Universal House of Justice

12 February 1990

To the Bahá'ís of the World

With feelings of thankfulness and joy we announce an achievement of immense importance to the accelerating progress of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The University of Maryland and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States recently signed a memorandum of understanding, establishing "The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace" at that University's Center for International Development and Conflict Management. The stated purpose of the Chair is "to conduct and publish research, design courses and conduct seminars in the field of Bahá'í studies and world peace within an interdisciplinary context; to initiate public forums for discussing the issues proposed in the Statement of the Universal House of Justice entitled *The Promise of World Peace*; and to establish academic linkages with and provide technical assistance to Bahá'í institutions in the fields of peace education and international development."

This first initiative by a well-founded, significant institution of higher learning to formulate such a serious program of Bahá'í studies is a direct response to the Peace Statement, as is borne out by a letter addressed to us by the Director of the Center for International Development and Conflict Management in which he said: "With this letter I am answering on behalf of CIDCM and the University of Maryland your call: 'If the Bahá'í experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model for study.'"

Fully cognizant of Bahá'u'lláh's praise of knowledge as "wings to man's life" and of the importance which He assigns to its acquisition; of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice that we should "seek to impart the Message to influential persons and become a cause of guidance to the learned and distinguished"; and of Shoghi Effendi's call for a "resolute attempt" to reinforce measures "for the establishment of closer contact with the leaders of public thought, with colleges and universities," we hail this seminal development both as a mark of the Faith's emergence from obscurity and as the harbinger of that day when hosts of scholars will devote their energies to the exploration, exposition and defense of the dynamic principles animating the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, thereby fulfilling the need identified by the beloved Guardian for "well-read and well-educated people, capable of correlating our teachings to the current thoughts of the leaders of society." On that day, we shall witness an expansion and consolidation of the community as has not yet been experienced.

May the Blessed Beauty enable the new Bahá'í Chair for World Peace to achieve its laudable purpose; may He shower upon all who support it His abundant confirmations.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]